



# JACK DOYLE

## MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**For Immediate Release:**  
**Friday, January 18, 2002**

### **DOYLE PLEDGES TO MAINTAIN COUNTY'S FISCAL HEALTH & CONTINUED PROPERTY TAX STABILITY**

*Eroding State Revenue May Require Day Care Cut; County Freezes Hiring & Department Head Salaries; Self-Insurance Investigated; Agencies Put On Notice*

County Executive Jack Doyle today announced measures to solidify Monroe County's continued fiscal health. Reduced state revenues to the county require positive action to avoid tax increases or deficit spending.

"I remain committed to Monroe County's taxpayers through stable property taxes," said Doyle. "In the face of decreasing state revenues and other post-September 11<sup>th</sup> economic challenges, stable property taxes are more important today than ever before. People are concerned about their jobs and livelihoods and I want all of our area residents to know that property tax increases are off the table in Monroe County."

Due to a projected shortfall of \$8 million in anticipated state revenue, Doyle has started discussions on the impact of this shortfall on subsidized, income-eligible day care slots. The County Executive has initiated meetings with local day care providers to work on possible solutions that would avoid a necessary reduction of slots and has sent communications to the local state delegation for assistance.

To further alleviate budget pressures, Doyle has also frozen county department head salaries, at 2001 levels, and instituted an across-the-board hiring freeze countywide.

"As municipalities across the state grapple with fiscal issues in different ways, I am convinced that the only responsible course for our community is to take positive steps now to avoid fiscal crisis as the year progresses," said Doyle. "Monroe County's taxpayers cannot afford to sit back now only to face future deficits. The painful lessons of the city school district have shown that positive fiscal action today will avoid even more painful reactionary measures later."

Unless state revenues for day care can be restored to previously anticipated levels, corresponding program cuts will need to be initiated. The Department of Social Services is taking action to prepare for this scenario, however, the County Executive will continue his efforts to work with providers and the state to avoid the elimination of slots.

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“September 11<sup>th</sup> was a previously unthinkable event that has held equally unthinkable consequences for state revenue streams,” said Doyle. “As the state comes to terms with post-September 11<sup>th</sup> realities, we too must realize that our dependence on state revenues puts us on delicate fiscal ground. When faced with difficult decisions like reducing day care slots, I feel it is necessary and very appropriate to institute other fiscally responsible measures like the hiring freeze and department head wage freeze.”

In 2001, Monroe County absorbed a \$5 million shortfall in anticipated state revenues for day care. Adding further stress to the budget, the county’s Medicaid caseload and corresponding costs increased by 4,000 cases last year.

Facing increases in cost and no corresponding revenue, the county would face an \$8 million shortfall in day care funding without the reduction of a possible 2,000 income-eligible day care slots. Since late last year, Doyle has instituted meetings to inform day care providers of the revenue shortfall and to seek their assistance in resolving this issue. While productive, the meetings have failed to identify any additional revenue streams to avoid the loss of slots to date.

The Doyle Administration will continue its efforts to restore these revenues by meeting with appropriate state officials. Meetings with local day care providers and efforts to obtain assistance from the state legislative delegation will also be ongoing. If the \$8 million revenue shortfall cannot be replaced, however, reductions in day care slots will be necessary by March 2002.

“I am continuing my efforts to address day care revenue issues head-on without consideration of a property tax increase, but I cannot manufacture revenue streams that no longer exist,” said Doyle. “As we face increased expenses in areas like Medicaid, there are no dollars available in the budget to plug massive revenue gaps like those identified in day care. Every taxpayer knows that they cannot spend dollars they don’t have when they figure out their home budgets and pay their own household bills. To keep faith with our taxpayers, I feel that county government must play by these same rules.”

Agencies and organizations receiving county funding tied to state revenues have also been notified that future reductions in state funding to the county may result in corresponding program cuts.

In another possible cost-saving move, Monroe County is accepting proposals from qualified firms to perform an analysis of its current health insurance program and to make a recommendation regarding a self-funded health coverage benefit for its employees and retirees.

Critical public safety and public health positions will not be affected by the county's announced hiring freeze.

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